

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PM-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY

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E. O. 11652, N/ A

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: NOON PRESS BRIEFING - PANAMA CANAL TREATY
NEGOTIATIONS

FOLLOWING IS TRANSCRIPT OF NOON PRESS BRIEFING TUESDAY,
JULY 3 (GUIDANCE PREPARED FOR DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN MONDAY,
JULY 2):

Q: IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT WE HAVEN' T
ASKED YOU ABOUT?

A: NO, I WAS TEMPTED TO CALL THIS BRIEFING OFF.

Q: VOLUNTEER SOMETHING.

A: HOWEVER, IF YOU' RE REALLY INTERESTED IN JUST ANOTHER
LITTLE TIDBIT, JUST TO SATISFY PERHAPS A LINGERING
CURIOSITY SOME PLACE ABOUT PANAMA CANAL NEGOTIATIONS. AS
YOU MIGHT RECALL, THERE WERE REPORTS OVER THE WEEKEND THAT
NEGOTIATIONS WERE ABOUT TO RESUME, AND YOU MIGHT BE
INTERESTED IN KNOWING WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THE TREATY
NEGOTIATIONS.

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I CAN SAY THIS: THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THE PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER, MR. TACK, INVITING THE UNITED STATES NEGOTIATING TEAM TO PANAMA TO CONTINUE THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. AND WE HAVE BEEN STUDYING THIS LETTER AND

WILL BE RESPONDING SHORTLY.

Q: YOU ARE GOING TO RESPOND FAVORABLY, OF COURSE?

A: WELL, WE'VE ALWAYS EXPRESSED OUR WILLINGNESS AND DESIRE TO REACH A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT, AND I WOULD ASSUME THAT OUR RESPONSE WOULD REFLECT THAT VIEW.

Q: IS IT CORRECT THAT ELLSWORTH BUNKER IS BECOMING THE CHIEF NEGOTIATOR?

A: WITHOUT ANSWERING THAT QUESTION, I WOULD SIMPLY NOTE, AS I AM SURE YOU HAVE NOTED, THAT MR. ROBERT ANDERSON'S RESIGNATION WAS ACCEPTED BY THE WHITE HOUSE, AND I PRESUME THAT ANY FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS ON THIS PARTICULAR SUBJECT WOULD COME OUT OF THE WHITE HOUSE....

Q: WHEN DID THE LETTER ARRIVE?

A: I BELIEVE IN THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS, BUT I DON'T HAVE A DATE.

Q: IT HAD NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED PREVIOUSLY IN ANY WAY THAT YOU DID GET SUCH A LETTER. IS THAT THE FIRST TIME YOU'RE ANNOUNCING THAT YOU GOT A LETTER FROM THE PANAMANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER?

A: TO MY KNOWLEDGE, YES....

Q: WHEN YOU BEGAN TO ANSWER OUR VERY SEARCHING QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE PANAMA CANAL, YOU SOUNDED LIKE YOU WERE ABOUT TO TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE STATUS OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. CAN YOU TELL US WHETHER THE TWO SIDES APPEAR TO BE ANY CLOSER ON THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES, AS OPPOSED TO THE PROCEDURAL ONE OF HOLDING ANOTHER MEETING?

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A: NO, I CAN'T.

Q: BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT CLOSER, OR BECAUSE --

A: I'M SORRY I INTRODUCED THE SUBJECT NOW.

Q: BECAUSE THEY ARE OR ARE NOT CLOSER TOGETHER, OR BECAUSE

YOU DON' T KNOW?

A: NO, I JUST CAN' T TALK ABOUT THE ACTUAL NEGOTIATING
POSITIONS OF THE TWO SIDES. RUSH

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*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

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